



NEWS

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BREEDING SURVEYS OF ATLANTIC FLYWAY CANADA GEESE SHOW DECLINE IN PAIRS BUT GOOD NESTING SUCCESS

This summer's surveys of the nesting areas of the Atlantic Flyway population of migratory Canada geese estimated a 33-percent decline in the number of breeding pairs from last year. However, the birds appeared to be having good nesting success for the second consecutive year.

Canadian and American biologists recorded 42,200 breeding pairs on Canada's Ungava Peninsula, down from 63,200 estimated in the 1997 survey.

"The decrease in the estimate may be partly the result of an earlier-than-normal spring that advanced the nesting seasons," said Paul Schmidt, chief of the Migratory Bird Management Office. "At the time of the survey, many of the goslings had already hatched and accompanying adults were more secretive and harder to see from the air than pairs that were still nesting. Nevertheless, this is not the increase we had anticipated from the Atlantic population this year."

On the positive side, warm spring temperatures and limited snowfall during the winter months will lead to good nesting success and production of goslings this year. Biologists estimated the total population, including both breeding and non-breeding geese, climbed 18 percent to the highest level since 1988.

"Good nesting success on the breeding grounds and higher survival of adults and young during the fall, winter, and spring will speed the long-term recovery of the species," Schmidt said. "Once young females from these years of good production reach breeding age, pair estimates should increase rapidly and ensure a sustained recovery."

In 1995, the Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service closed the hunting season for migratory Canada geese breeding in northern Quebec in response to a 75-percent decline in breeding pairs to 29,000 from the 118,000 recorded in 1988. Biologists blamed years of poor habitat conditions, low reproductive success, and high harvest rates for the decline.

The Atlantic Flyway Council, representing state and provincial wildlife agencies, developed an action plan to address the problem and seek ways to rebuild the flock. The goal of the plan is to re-establish 150,000 breeding pairs in the Ungava Region. The

plan recommends not re-opening the hunting season until the number of breeding pairs reaches 60,000 pairs with evidence of a sustained recovery over several years.

These geese should not be confused with overly abundant resident Canada geese that abide year-round on golf courses, parks, and other urban areas and do not migrate.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service's nearly 93 million acres include 514 national wildlife refuges, 78 ecological services field stations, 66 national fish hatcheries, 50 wildlife coordination areas, and 38 wetland management districts with waterfowl production areas.

The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America.